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CHAPTER I - LANDING IN JAPAN

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## Abstract

In which our three heroes -- William E. Griffis, missionary; Edward S. Morse, scientist; and Lafcadio Hearn, writer -- find during their first weeks in Japan that this Asian country lives up to some of their preconceptions, violates others, and altogether proves to be a more complicated, perplexing, challenging, and interesting place than they had imagined.

## CHAPTER I - LANDING IN JAPAN

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Mount Fuji is there for William Elliot Griffis on that crisp morning of December 29, 1870. It calls to him, pulls him out of the stateroom and onto the deck of the S.S. Great Republic. It hangs in the distance, "beyond beach and timber-crested hill, beyond rolling plain and crumpled mountain range, a vision of perfection, crowned with snow and tinted with early sunlight. Its shape is at once familiar and alien, part of a world of coppery men in small fishing boats, of thatched huts and countryside quilted with the odd shapes of rice paddies, a strange world where you can tell at a glance that everything is the same and nothing is the same and where it is impossible to know what such thoughts may mean. To find his bearing in this world, to tame the vision, Griffis begins to form sentences in his mind. Shinto deity the mountain may be, but comfort comes from seeing it in Christian terms, as a "fitting temple of the Creator's architecture, at which his children might look while their hearts poured out in gratitude for kindly guidance through the perils of the deep."

Familiar names, part of an offhand Western arrogance that defines the contours of many an Asian landscape, guide the way towards port. On placid winter waters the vessel slowly wheels past Reception Bay, where Commodore Perry's squadron of Black Ships anchored in July, 1853,

past sharp outcroppings of rock and jutting green headlands -- Webster Isle, Cape Saratoga and Treaty Point -- past the huge inlet of Mississippi Bay, and into the harbor before Yokohama, bristling with the masts of an international flotilla. Junks, sampans, paddlewheel and screw-driven steamers, small vessels that make mail runs to Hakodate, Shanghai and Hong Kong, larger ones from Marseilles, Rotterdam and Southampton, warships both wooden and ironclad, flying British, French, American, Dutch, Prussian and Japanese flags. At the shoreline, no docks, but only two, small, stone breakwaters fronting a mile-square mass of low buildings with tile roofs. To the left and right wooded hills, with glimpses of homes amidst the greenery.

No time for Griffis to reflect on the scene before him. Too much excitement, a jumble of sensations, inner and outer, as the engines fall silent, the great side paddle wheels stop churning and small boats sweep down and surround the Great Republic, strangely still after twenty-nine days of motion. In an instant swarms of visitors are aboard. The upper deck, the plush salons, the staterooms crowded with well-dressed Europeans, looking for business contacts, asking questions, giving advice on hotels, asking for news. Germans and Frenchmen want to know of war developments on the continent. Englishmen worry over a possible conflict with Russia. Few ladies among them, except those striking females who do not fail to catch Griffis's eye: "Fancy creatures in velvet and diamonds, with gold on their fingers and brass in their faces, [who] came on board to see if any of their guild had arrived from San Francisco."

The descent via steerage to the gangplank leads through a different sort of world. Hordes of close-packed Chinese passengers in soiled robes, odd fish smells, a din of incomprehensible words shouted by merchants doing a brisk trade in mandarin oranges, dried persimmons and enormous brown bottles of sake, exchanging brass Japanese coins and iron and copper cash for dimes, greenbacks, Mexican silver dollars. A first close look at the natives, standing in coal lighters and in clean, unpainted sculls, waiting to carry passengers ashore. An American woman, perhaps unwilling to believe the evidence of her eyes, comments on their tight-fitting leather garments. But closer inspection reveals them clad in no more than the "clothing mother Nature provides for her children," with only the tiniest of loin cloths to protect them from the elements or the startled stares of foreigners. Two such men, their bodies small but well-built and muscular, vigorously work a scull in the rear of the shallow craft that skims Griffiths the half-mile to shore. Up onto a stone pier he climbs and into what he will always call "the Mikado's Empire."

Yokohama was not quite that. To land there in 1870 was to enter a town in but not wholly of Japan, a meeting ground for two civilizations, a little bit of the Western world grafted uneasily onto the edge of the Orient. Hastily constructed by the Japanese in 1859 as the first port open to foreign trade, rebuilt following a devastating fire in 1866, Yokohama was a boom town flavored with the speculative fever of a frontier, the scene of business large and small, upright and

shady, of solid investment and high risk enterprise, of longtime Asian trading agencies like Jardine, Matheson, and short-term firms that sprang up one week and vanished the next. Fifteen hundred Westerners, three thousand Chinese and twenty-five thousand natives called it home, and the population was growing daily; buildings already spilled over the original canal and river boundaries into the valleys and hills beyond. To protect the Europeans, with their extraterritorial rights, eight hundred British soldiers camped on the Bluff to the West and two battalions of French troops were garrisoned in a gulley below them. In the streets mingled a most diverse population: merchant sailors and drifters from a score of nations; tourists over from China; globetrotters -- the word was newly-coined -- on the first or last leg of a circumnavigation; swarms of Japanese visitors, down from Tokyo for the day or drawn from farther points to shop, sample Western food and observe the buildings and behavior the of foreigners who had torn their nation from seclusion.

Business, pleasure and curiosity brought a cosmopolitan population together in Yokohama, but only in public. Private life, the realm of home and society, was rigidly segregated. So were the city quarters. To the left of the Customs shed where Griffis landed lay the European Settlement. Rambling wooden structures, the offices of important Western commercial companies, faced the harbor across a broad, stone Bund. Inward, on streets plotted at right angles, a jumbled array of restaurants, hotels, stone-fronted banks, fenced-in dwellings, livery stables, barber shops, newspaper offices, auction rooms and stores,

large and small. The best, clustered along Main street, with plate glass windows that revealed a variety of Western products: jewelry, watches, dresses and suits, boots and shoes, utensils, sewing machines, sweets, baked goods. Scattered everywhere in the Settlement were windowless, fireproof stone godowns, or storehouses, many reeking with the pungent -- some found it nauseating -- odor of tea being dried over charcoal fires. Farther back, on reclaimed swampland, the angular section of Chinatown, narrow lanes jammed with stalls selling fruit, vegetables, fish, herbs and steaming bowls of food few Westerners cared to taste.

To the right of Customs was the Japanese section. Thoroughfares were bordered by two-story wooden houses whose sliding panels threw lower floors open to the world. On platforms covered with soft, white mats, a variety of native products: colorful silks, painted scrolls, lacquerware, porcelain, cabinets inlaid with ivory and tortoise shell, baskets, carved wooden dolls, fans, bronzes. Densely-packed, narrow streets full of shops and restaurants for the natives, places to buy wooden geta, books and cheap prints, cotton robes, household utensils, and to sample bowls of noodles, cups of sake, pieces of sushi. Located here, the two most famous or infamous of institutions, the public bath houses of Honcho-dori and the licensed pleasure quarter named Miyosaki. At a variety of tea shops, restaurants and call houses in this district, young women could be hired to dance, sing, play the koto or samisen, or to entertain men in more intimate ways. Most celebrated, most notorious of all was the Gankiro, an elegant establishment



complete with goldfish pond, red lacquer bridges, wide balconies and banquet halls. Its aim was the foreign trade, its prices three times as high as similar houses catering to Japanese.

The man who stepped ashore that December morning, twenty-seven year old W. E. Griffis, was not the sort either to ignore or sample such fleshly pleasures. He was a person of complex and mixed motivation, part teacher, part missionary, part opportunist. A year at Rutgers' Theological Seminary had underscored strong moral and religious concerns. But it neither banished desire nor blinded an eye looking for economic opportunity. The call to Japan was to a teaching position in Fukui, the capital of provincial Echizen, at a salary so large that he expected both to secure his future and help support parents and three siblings in Philadelphia. Literary ambition was another part of the decision. Griffis was canny enough to recognize a subject ripe for exploitation, and had in mind articles and books describing the oddities of this little-known, exotic empire. Care was also part of his makeup. Sewn inside his coat was a special pocket, holding a small Smith and Wesson revolver. The political turbulence that followed the opening of Japan to the West fifteen years before was not yet at an end, and some conservative samurai were still ready to use the steel blades of their swords to enforce the cry of "sonno joi" -- "Revere the emperor and expel the barbarians."

Intruding barbarians like Griffis had good and rational reasons for their behavior. Japan needed the commerce, the science, the

Western languages, the true religion of a tradition with "treasures of knowledge and wisdom higher" than that provided by the Orient. This last point was the stickiest. Resigned it might be to economic interaction with foreigners, but the Japanese government had not yet relented in its two-hundred fifty year old ban on the preaching and practice of Christianity. People like Griffis foresaw themselves in subversive roles. The aim was not only to teach but also to show -- surreptitiously to be sure -- how progress in industry, commerce, technology, medicine and government were intimately connected to the core religious values of Western civilization. This to soften up the natives, allow Christianity to spread among them like a "silent conquering force." That the need was great could not be doubted. Japan was widely known as a "land of seductive temptations of the most fearful sort."

Temptation ran in more than one direction. The view from America left no doubt that it was the heathen Japanese who needed to be educated and saved. Clarity on this point began to blur the moment Griffis walked out of the Custom House and into the arms of a half dozen Protestant missionary families. For four days he was a virtual captive of their hospitality. The native town, the stores and restaurants, the crowds in the streets -- all these were background to the problems and intellectual concerns of the Settlement. Glimpses of street jugglers, vendors, teams of men pushing heavily-laden carts; signs in an odd jumble of languages; images of soldiers in smart blue or red uniforms, girls in kimono splashed with colorful designs,

Catholic priests in dark cassocks; sounds of words in Japanese, German, Chinese, Dutch, French -- all these could only be briefly noted as he moved from dinner at one home to supper at another, from a January 1 reception given in the American Consulate by Charles E. DeLong to the Presbyterian Chapel, where Griffis preached a New Year's sermon.

Four days were enough time for the beginning of an education in the missionary point of view. The situation of Protestantism in Japan was more complicated than could have been guessed. Competition from Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox missionaries was only a minor part of the problem. The religious atmosphere of home had made missionaries seem exalted beings, highly deserving of "honor, respect and sympathy." In Yokohama they saw themselves as an embattled minority, a "neglected set of peculiar people." Leaders of local society, prosperous merchants and professionals, scorned the missionary endeavor. Over elaborate dinners in their Western-style mansions on the Bluff, they repeated slanderous tales about religious figures, denouncing them as wife-beaters, liars, cheats, hypocrites, speculators. Few Westerners attended church. Far too many took economic advantage of the natives and some acted with a most unChristian brutality, kicking, beating and blaspheming servants. Blame for this was primarily directed at the English, but license and immorality was confined to no single nationality. Soldiers, sailors and drifters caroused, gambled and brawled in the grog shops and taverns of an area known as Blood Town. The "white woman in scarlet" might not be numerous, but her Japanese sisters were all too common. Foreigners flocked to the Miyosaki

district and many lived openly with native concubines. All this was startling evidence that the word "heathen" might be applied to those raised in Christian nations as well as to unenlightened pagans. It was a hint the progressive lessons of the West were shaded with ambiguity, that the light and dark of social change were inextricably intertwined.

January 3, 1871. Early morning. The Yankee ready to invade the Land of the Gods. A frosty day, the air keen as a razor, Griffis' pocket thermometer reading twenty-eight degrees fahrenheit. The colors of the morning sharp, clear, almost painful: "Blue sky, blue water, blue mountains, white Fuji." On the Bund a stagecoach, two ponies in harness, room for three passengers. Cost to the capital city: two Mexican dollars. In the driver's seat, an Australian, liquor on his breath and mighty oaths in his mouth. A crack of the whip and they are rattling along the Bund, around the British Consulate and down Bentendori into the native town. Shopboys raising curtains on storefronts, bathhouses overflowing with people. Into the street steps a man, "naked as when he stepped out into the world. His copper hue, like a lobster's, is intensified by the boiling he has just undergone. He walks in a self-exhaling cloud of auroral vapors, like a god in ambrosia. He deigns not to make his toilet while in sight, but proceeds homeward, clothes in hand."

Across the river on the nation's first iron bridge and onto a causeway to the Tokaido, the great high road joining Kyoto and Tokyo. Behind lay foreign sights; ahead the "real Japan . . . a new world, not

the Old." A picture book. Villages "strung along the road like a great illuminated scroll." Small wooden buildings, mostly one-story. Glimpses of families at breakfast, eating rice, pickled radishes, messes of unknown vegetables. Clusters of youngsters at play, women in kimono with rosy-cheeked babies strapped to their backs, papooses in reverse, staring forward over mother's shoulder. Alien visions: priests with shaven heads, wearing long robes with brocade collars; merchants in tight breeches; laborers with bare legs; samurai, hair in lacquered topknots, two swords stuck into broad sashes; religious pilgrims, clad entirely in white. Less pleasant sights: beggars, young and old, dirty, ragged, covered with sores, voices raised in a tone of universal suffering. By the side of the road a dead body, unburied, unmourned.

Crowded Kanagawa slows the coach to a walk. Traditional town life. No bakeries, no butcher shops, but fish and vegetable stalls. Nothing aimed at tourists, no lacquers, porcelains or silk, but tiny shops with meager stocks of straw sandals, paper umbrellas, rush hats, bamboo utensils. Slowly up long, steep hills, and then the coach at a rush under an arch of ancient pine to a teahouse stop. Refreshments for man and beast. For the horses, water; for the driver, brandy from a flask; for the travelers, tea and sweetmeats carried by pretty girls who come forward with downcast glances and soft-spoken "Ohayo's." A head raises and Griffis, stunned by a pair of dark eyes, refuses all refreshment but places a tip on the tray "for beauty's sake." A brief encounter, but memorable. Worth of description, of generalization:

"The maid is about seventeen, graceful in figure, and her neat dress is bound with a wide girdle and tied into a huge bow beyond. Her neck is powdered. Her laugh displays a row of superb white teeth, and her jet-black hair is rolled in a maidenly style. The fairest sight in Japan are Japan's fair daughters."

Deep bows and cries of "Sayonara" from the young ladies send the coach onward. Villages of thatched roof houses, iris blazing purple along ridgepoles. Landscapes strange to eyes accustomed to Pennsylvania fields of winter wheat. The country is a vast, muddy ditch, rice fields covered with water and studded with stubble. Dark pine on low hills slashed with the bright tints of feathery bamboo. At Kawasaki a stop for fresh horses and a river-crossing in a flat-bottom boat. A dozen ill-clad "coolies" in a warming hut make room for the foreigner to approach the fire. This action by the lowest class of natives leads to reflection: one needs neither schooling, or political freedom to be polite, kind, humane. But the relative merits of two traditions remains firm. In Asia, arms, legs, trunk and head do not add up to the same thing as at home. Here the result was "a wheelbarrow, a beast of burden, a political cipher, a being who exists for the sake of his masters or the government." In America things were different: "With us a man is a man."

One jarring note, a portent of the future: a bright new railway bridge, yet unused, spans the river. Again the coach moves. Bamboo thickets, pine grove and rice field give way to dense villages, the far-flung suburbs of a city of almost a million, the largest in the

world. The welcome is grim. At Shinagawa, on a pole six feet high, two heads of samurai propped up by lumps of clay under the ears. Dried blood stains the timbers, hangs in icicles of gore. Inside the black city gate, the Kosatsu, small roof over a wooden signboard full of ancient edicts renewed by the latest regime. Laws against political activities, against arson and theft; decrees reaffirming the old Confucian hierarchies, urging charity to the orphaned, the childless, the sick. The graceful characters are a mystery, but Griffis has had the most important of edicts drummed into him: "The evil sect called Christian is strictly prohibited. Suspicious persons should be reported to the proper officers, and a reward will be given." Dark notes vanish in a bright hilltop view, the vast spread of the city, Fuji once again, the blue Bay of Tokyo with a chain of small forts, originally built to withstand Perry's gunboats. Beyond, a half-dozen vessels of Japan's new navy, each flying the national flag, red sun on a white field, the rising symbol of a nation in the process of rebirth.

For six weeks in Tokyo Griffis stayed at the home of Guido Verbeck, a Dutch Reform minister who was principal of Nanko Daigaku, a new preparatory school that was in the process of growing into Japan's first western-style college. The house was in Tsukiji, the foreign quarter, built on land reclaimed from the Sumida River. Some fifty people -- teachers, diplomats and missionaries -- lived in this two-year-old paved, well-lighted section, shielded from the native population by canals and a guardhouse manned by soldiers day and night.

It was a period both lazy and full. There was time for hours of reading in Verbeck's well-stocked library of books on Japan, and time for long rambles through the jumbled streets of the city; time to deliver lectures at the college and to tutor students privately in English, and time to begin studying Japanese; time for horseback rides all around Tokyo and then along the Tokaido to visit temples, parks, shrines and gardens; time for conversation with some of the most westernized of the new Meiji government leaders, and time to turn notes on local customs into articles for the Christian Intelligencer.

Negotiations over the contract with Echizen went forward and concluded with a document in both English and Japanese. Griffis was named principal of the local college and teacher of chemistry and natural science. For this he would receive \$3600 a year and be provided with a horse and fodder, a European-style house, free postage and a one-month's vacation. The signing was celebrated at a banquet hosted by the ruler of Echizen, Prince Shungaku Matsudaira, in the sumptuous quarters of his yashiki, or Tokyo mansion. Here was an eye-opener, a glimpse of feudal splendor, a vision of old Japan. In rooms of fine woodwork that showed a virgin grain "like watered silk," among walls gorgeously papered in silver and gold and screens covered with delicate, ancient paintings of bamboo, cherry blossoms, lilies, storks and cranes, Griffis, Verbeck and a large number of samurai feasted on a ten-course European meal accompanied by ale, sherry, claret and champagne. It was a stunning affair, marred only momentarily by members of the prince's staff whose Westernization was uncertain --



several made loud slurping noises into their soup and took occasional refreshing swallows from their finger bowls.

Six weeks in Tokyo. Not a long period, but time enough for the fresh to edge towards the routine, the unusual towards the common. Left behind in words is a record of those first instants of shock and delight, not to be repeated or forgotten, those moments which never smoothly blend into a mass of later recollections where everything points towards a moral. Diverse images, held together by an eye of consciousness. The handsome streets of the Yoshiwara, the licensed pleasure quarter; the plaintive sound of the samisen issuing from luxurious houses, the girls, young and younger still, behind bars, lounging in open windows, waiting, waiting: "Oriental splendor -- a myth in the streets -- becomes reality when the portals of the Yoshiwara are crossed." The open shutters of private houses, of merchants and artisans, with glimpses of a sort unknown at home: an eighteen-year-old in a sunny window, washing her long black hair, "the human form divine, bare to the waist." The students of Nanko Daigakku at the end of a schoolday: hundreds of boys and young men in robes with long sleeves, murderous-looking swords thrust into sashes from which dangle bottles of cheap ink; slates and copy books carried in hands smeared with the black fluid.

A day at the great temple of Kwannon at Asakusa. No solemnity here, but acres of gardens alive with the atmosphere of a fair; curio shops, refreshment booths, people eating, dancing, smoking, drinking

sake, laughing aloud: "Religion and innocent pleasure join hands in Japan. Are the Japanese wrong in this?" A seventy-foot-high pagoda, bright orange and white. The curved temple roof of black tiles, it's huge timbered supports, the home of flocking pigeons. Dim lighting, candles, bronze lanterns on stone pedestals; the sweet smell of incense and sesame; the crowds, mothers, maidens, children, old men and boys, noisy, clapping hands, shouting, growing silent in momentary meditation; the odd sight of men in western clothing, bowing to statues of foxes and demons; the freeing descent down stone steps "from the pent-up closeness of the priests' temple into the boundless freedom of God's glorious creation . . ."

Not all moments are pleasant, interesting, joyous. Fear can border horseback rides to suburban shrines, rambles through streets where no western faces are to be seen, formal dinners in the foreign compound. It is impossible to forget that fifty foreigners have in the last decade fallen beneath the sword of the samurai, or to ignore the rumors of plots, threats, plans for uprisings that speed through a nervous city of a government but two years in power. Encountered in the streets, bands of retainers for the great Daimyo appear insolent, swaggering, full of black scowls, their sharp swords ready to move with speed. Then one night, fear becomes reality. At four a.m. on Saturday, January 14, a knock on the door and word that two English teachers have been cut down. Behind Verbeck and a servant with a lantern, Griffis hurries through a maze of dark streets, enters for the first time into the dim interior of a native house, hung with "emblems

and tokens of Japanese religion, enjoyment, and superstition." The next day he travels on the stage through snow and slush to Yokohama, where the news throws the community into an uproar and arms are broken out. Back in Tokyo, on Sunday, he plays nurse to the wounded men while the government searches for the assailants. A sad affair, to be sure, but one in which the victims are not entirely blameless. That is Verbeck's point of view and soon Griffis' as well. The two men were out past the curfew, a time notoriously unsafe for foreigners. They had dismissed their native guards. They had often been involved with native women and were with prostitutes when the attack occurred. A clear provocation. The action must be seen in context. It is part of a long run of cruelties against Japan by foreigners, a sad story which included "overbearing insolence, cruelty, insult, the jealousy of paramours . . . "

Six weeks in Tokyo draw to a close. A time for tourism over, a time for labor at hand. The fixed poles of Griffis' interests are clear, the lens through which he views this alien social order is polished clean. Amidst a deluge of impressions -- the "experience of paganism, feudalism, earthquakes, Asian life and morality" -- he focuses on women and morality, on the meaning of true religion and heathen practices. Judgments are confused, blunted, and the sharpest ones point back towards home: "I had seen how long contact with heathen life and circumstances slowly disintegrated the granite principles of eternal right, once held by men raised in a more bracing moral atmosphere. I met scores of white men, from Old and New England,

who had long since forgotten the difference between right and wrong." Such unexpected developments, the result of a confrontation of two social orders, fueled a desire for something simpler for rural life. Yokohama and Tokyo were, after all, only the antechamber to the nation. Griffis expected Echizen to show Japan undefiled, to reveal the nation's heart.

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A rush of sudden pleasure. The swelling excitement of waking for the first time in Asia. Sharp images burst through the window, sharp feelings stab Edward S. Morse as he gazes from the Grand Hotel into a pale Yokohama morning. Outside is a strange realm, "a world of delight." Only the color of the sea, lightening slowly from black to blue, and the frigates and steamers in the harbor are familiar. Everything else in view is novel, fascinating; the quaint shapes of native craft slipping down the narrow canal to the right; the black-haired people streaming by on the Bund, some in robes, some in loin cloths, a few sporting an odd, jarring item of Western clothing, trousers, boots, a top hat; the line of rickshas, enormous baby carriages on tall wheels, waiting at the iron gates of the hotel. It all seems a marvellous birthday present. The date is June 18, 1877. Today he is thirty-nine years old.

Morse takes up a sketchbook. With him, line comes first, words later. No artistic motive drives his pen, no desire to capture panoramic views or to render the fullness of a moment. The small and practical are his focus, his way of dealing with the sprawl of reality. Neither darkness nor sea swell the night before hindered him from making sketches of the curious oars and locks of the scull carrying passengers ashore. Now he is interested in the types of wooden clogs clattering along the Bund and the primitive pile-driver worked by eight laborers engaged in building a sea wall at the entrance to the canal. They stand on a staging lashed together with rope and straw, join voices in an odd, monotonous chant, and then, at the end of each

stanza, tug mightily on ropes that loop through pulleys and connect to a heavy weight which rises quickly and drops with a heavy thud. The New England mind finds something odd in such behavior: "It seemed a ridiculous waste of time to sing the chanty, for such it was, without exerting the slightest effort to raise the weight. Nine-tenths of the time was devoted to singing!"

Wasting time is for others. A hurried breakfast and Morse is off on a brisk walk into the native quarter. First impressions are strong, disorienting, pleasant: the odd architecture; the signs with their strange, suggestive characters; the sounds of the people; the odor of tea and cedar; the freedom of women to nurse children in public; the use of men rather than beasts of burden to drag carts and carry huge loads of merchandise. Attractive displays of wares entice Morse, pull him in to look, handle, buy. No matter how small the stock, no matter how poor the shop, there is no sense of hurry. One sits on the edge of a platform. Tea is brought forth, tiny pipes are lit, male and female attendants softly bow, smile, chatter, make the customer feel like a welcome guest. Visible through wide-open panels are rooms where family members eat, drink, read, doze or work to produce items sold in front. Feelings of rudeness are submerged by curiosity. Morse cannot help staring at domestic arrangements in rooms so startling in their emptiness: "No chairs, table or other articles of furniture are seen, unless it might be a case of drawers; no chimney, no stove, no attic, no cellar, no door even, only sliding screens." Space is left for the

imagination, for the notion that Japanese life is like "a lot of children playing baby house."

Surprise and novelty pull him onward. Every item in use -- pipes, teacups, tools, curtains screening the sun -- and every item on sale -- fans, toys, wood carvings, ceramics, lacquerware, cakes -- seems a marvellous blend of design, decoration and craftsmanship. An eye attuned to detail enjoys a feast. Time distends, vanishes. There is always another shop to enter, another sketch to make, another cup of tea to drink. When consciousness returns, Morse is lost, fatigued and famished. But not alone. A ricksha man, waved aside at the Grand Hotel, has followed him all morning, gazing into the same shops, echoing each smile and bow. Now is the moment for his reward, but the American, good democrat, good egalitarian, hesitates, experiences "a sense of humiliation" at the idea that a human being is to be his horse. Aching feet conquer scruples. He climbs into the frail vehicle and the barefoot, barelegged, bareheaded man grasps the shafts and starts to run. A pleasant up and down oscillation turns embarrassment to exhilaration. Dwellings, shops, restaurants, midday crowds flash by "like various pictures we had seen on fans and . . . thought were exaggerations." By the time they reach the hotel, Morse is a convert: "You really travel at a good speed, your horse never runs away, and when you stop he guards your property."

Nobody had invited Edward S. Morse to Japan. No private organization, no government agency or bureau on either side of the

Pacific had suggested the journey, arranged passage or paid his way. Other Westerners arrived in Yokohama in the seventies as tourists, teachers, technical experts, missionaries or businessmen. Morse was none of these. His profession was science. So was his religion. A childhood passion for collecting shells from riverbank, woods and seashore had become a lifelong affair. He was a natural scientist -- the name 'zoologist' was just coming into use -- one known equally well for undertakings scholarly and popular. On the lecture platform he could entertain and enlighten general audiences with facts and stories about butterflies, spiders and grizzly bears, glaciers and redwood trees, but his research interests were narrow and consistent. For fifteen years, on collecting and dredging expeditions from the Carolina Coast to the Bay of Fundy, he had been on the track of tiny shelled animals named Brachiopods. His arrival in Yokohama was in response to reports that the waters of Japan were loaded with many more varieties of these creatures than were known at home.

Morse was a Yankee, with many of the traits of the stereotype. For him, life was real and earnest, and its many forms were waiting to be studied, described and classified. Such attitudes meant a single day of sightseeing was enough. On June 19 he was itchy to work. Dredges and microscopes ready, he required only access to a boat and to some kind of structure to house specimens and serve as a makeshift laboratory. Simple as these aims might seem, in Japan they were quixotic. Here the study of zoology was unknown and the movements of visitors drastically circumscribed. Except for those employed by the



government, foreigners were restricted to within twenty miles of the Treaty Ports and forbidden to spend the night away from them. Only special permission would allow an American scientist to roam the countryside freely in order to find a suitable research site.

A fifty-minute train ride took him to Tokyo, where he met with David Murray, a mathematician from Rutgers who was Japan's Superintendent of Educational Affairs, and Fujimaro Tanaka, the Vice-Minister of Education. Their offices, Western in style, with tables, chairs and rugs, tasted of the native. No American rooms would contain such spare arrangements of flowers in simple vases, or earthenware vessels with live coals for smokers to use in lighting pipes or cigars. Nor would tea be brought before any business could be discussed, and certainly never by a servant whose bow was so low, so close to the floor. To speak with the minister an interpreter was necessary. Conversation was slow, formal and stiff, yet also oddly pleasant. The hushed, refined tones of Japanese somehow comforted and lulled Morse. Compliments on America and Japan flowed back and forth and all remarks were punctuated by smiles, nods, general feelings of goodwill. But getting down to specifics proved impossible. Requests vanished into a cloud of words, endlessly affirmative and insubstantial. He departed without receiving any direct answer to questions about research.

No doubt Murray and other Western contacts counselled patience, for in the next ten days Morse played tourist, shuttling back and forth between Yokohama and Tokyo. The train that he rode was but a single sign of Japan's rapid adoption of Western ways. Telegraph lines strung

along highways, gas lamps in the streets, the new boulevards of Tokyo, paved with macadam and lined with trees and brick buildings -- all these spoke the word "progress." So did the current political situation. In 1871 feudalism had been abolished and the old domains of the daimyo turned into administrative prefectures. Just a year before Morse's arrival samurai had been forbidden to wear swords, and assassination of Westerners was now a thing of the past. The several hundred foreign residents of Tokyo were still confined either to Tsukiji or one of the other compounds like that for university professors at the former Kaga Yashiki, but they no longer worried about walking the streets at night. Far to the south, on the island of Kyushu, the last opposition of conservatives to the modernizing Meiji government was in the final stages of collapse. The five-month-old revolt of 150,000 Satsuma men, led by Saigo Takamori, was down to a few hundred souls, who would be crushed by the new national conscript army in a September battle.

Political developments were of less concern to Morse than progress in science and technology. One way to pass the time was to seek longtime Western residents for facts and figures on Japanese advances in sanitation, health, engineering and education. Every scrap of evidence proclaiming the end of superstition and the advent of the scientific was a joy. The odd sight of university students in long robes performing experiments in a chemical laboratory was a happy sign. Another was the familiar click of American sewing machines, issuing from traditional houses. Most heartening was the attitude towards

medicine. To Morse this realm resembled religion, for people clung tenaciously to traditional beliefs "no matter how crazy and idiotic." The Japanese were different. They had quickly dropped the old Chinese "medical cult" in favor of more "rational" practices, and in some aspects of public health they were beginning to surpass Western nations. While at home one could still find "incredible idiots" who opposed smallpox vaccination, here the government was working vigorously to inoculate the entire population.

This kind of change came in a context. You could not simply seek out the new in Japan, for history and tradition were all-pervasive. Yet even when not on the track of the recent, he was an odd, idiosyncratic tourist. There is no evidence that Morse purchased a guidebook to Yokohama or Tokyo -- such volumes had been written by William E. Griffis -- and no indication that he lingered at designated "Places of Interest" like the tombs of Tokugawa Shoguns at Shiba or Ueno; or climbed Atago Yama for its "fine view" of the city, the Bay of Yedo and Mount Fuji; or visited Sengakuji, burial site of the famed forty-seven ronin. Temples, shrines and gardens pulled at him less than homelier sights that were of little concern to the average foreigner: a factory where tea was fired, the Yokohama fish and vegetable market, the natural history collection of the Imperial Museum in Ueno. Often he would simply wander the streets, an inquisitive eye, catching details of local life. He might never fully describe a landscape but could fill pages with descriptions of the system of collecting nightsoil and transporting it to the country for fertilizer;

or detail the strength, durability and superb design of workmen's tools; or note the way those practical instruments, chopsticks, were skillfully wielded not only at mealtime, but in a variety of tasks and in many different sizes by jewelers, cooks, street cleaners and ragpickers. This focus on the humble and practical was perfectly in character. Morse's normal way of dealing with reality was being transferred to the task of coming to grips with, understanding, taming, even measuring the disconcerting experience of a foreign civilization.

Four o'clock on the morning of June 29. Rickshas rolling through the dark, hushed streets of Tokyo, stars fading above curved roofs. Morse, Murray and some other Westerners are off for a ten-day jaunt into the countryside. With them, an interpreter from the Department of Education and two attendants to do the cooking, packing, lugging. This is a sightseeing trip dedicated to the joy of travel, the opportunity to visit Nikko and the great tombs of Tokugawa Iyeyasu. Morse has other things in mind. Eighty pounds of equipment -- insect nets, shell scoops, collecting bottles, specimen cases, small microscopes -- are packed into one of the vehicles. If live sea creatures are out of reach, insects, ancient shells, unusual plants will do.

Mild weather, hungry mosquitos, constant movement in ricksha and horse-drawn wagon. A hundred miles in two days, until eyes are weary with looking: rice fields with workers in straw hats so broad they seem from a distance like "animated toadstools;" shinto torii scattered everywhere over the landscape, framing paths that lead to weatherbeaten

shrines on forested hilltops; immaculate farmhouses with heavy thatched roofs and gleaming, polished wooden floors; a Buddhist temple, open as a pavilion, neat rows of clogs on the steps, a teacher before a blackboard covered with Chinese characters and Arabic numerals, reading from a book, and a crowd of students repeating his words in a sing-song drone; groups of blind girls, moving slowly along the road, plucking samisen and singing; rude countryfolk in village streets, concentrating over the polished stones and square boards of Go, a game "more complex" than chess; rest stops at primitive taverns, the walls hung with scrolls with ancient characters executed in bold calligraphic strokes. Translated, these prove to be "proverbs, good precepts from the classics, appeals to the beauty of nature" and all of "a high moral character." How different from home, where similar places are decorated with pictures of "prize fighters, burlesque, horse races or naked women."

Hasha-ishi, a mountain town with wild forest pressing close and cold brooks cascading through stone gutters in steep streets. Stopping at the best inn, sleeping on the floor, two kerosene lamps the only sign of Western life. Wide balconies, swept courtyards, dwarf pines, stone lanterns all speak of a tradition that flowers in the extensive, ornate complex of buildings and gardens of nearby Nikko. To visit there is one thing, to capture it another: "I must confess the utter inability of doing the slightest justice to the temples and tombs, so wonderful are they, so elaborate, so vast and magnificent." A retreat from a glut of twisting shape and color, from pagoda, carved roof,

statue and ornamental gate to more familiar activities: gathering frogs and comparing their protective coloration and comparing their protective coloration; studying the oddly spun webs of spiders; pinning moths and insects to a board; sharing the collection with an old man who gives their names in Japanese. And an interest in something new: the architecture of the inn compels detailed sketches. How restful the emptiness, how quiet and beautiful the unfinished wood, how tasteful the scroll in the tokonoma, how refined, discrete and attractive the treatment of the latrine in the courtyard, so unlike that which "in a New England village usually forms an unsightly and conspicuous object."

Uphill from Hasha-ishi a trip into boulder-strewn mountains. Moss-covered stone Buddhas crumble along narrow footpaths. Oppressive heat, underscored with cries of "atsui, atsui" from every passing traveller and echoed by the carriers. Promontories with views of distant peaks and torrents plunging through steep gorges. At a spring in full view of a teahouse where travellers sit on a verandah resting, two girls bare their tops and slip into the water: "On discovering that we were looking at them, they shyly, but laughingly drew their dresses up again, having heard that foreigners consider such behavior immodest. The whole affair was idyllic, and we realized more than ever that we were in a foreign land."

Higher still, to a two-mile-wide gleaming sheet of water named Lake Chuzenji, and a vain afternoon-long search for living mollusks on its banks. Higher still, a wearying climb up the steep sides of Mount Nantai to a summit more than eight thousand feet above sea level. An

ancient shrine, doors locked, statue of Buddah rumored within, open platform strewn with rusty coins, broken, corroded sword blades, queues of hair cut from the head and offered in sacrifice to emphasize solemn vows. The mind of the non-believer is impressed, more so to hear that most peaks in the land have similar shrines: "A wonderful conception, such devotion to their religion . . . to those places in August thousands throng to say their prayers as the sun rises. . . ." Admiration is different from reverence. The temptation to remove some sword fragments proves too strong to resist.

Then down. The way back to Tokyo is down. Down through waist-deep fields of blazing red azalea, through hillsides of purple iris, through unpleasant swarms of dragon flies, along dirt paths alive with beetles shining in a rainbow of colors. On July 4, Morse is alone for the afternoon, stripped to drawers and undershirt, broad straw hat shading him from the mountain sun, butterfly net in furious action, his voice raised over and over in the "Star Spangled Banner." And down. Down through mountain and forest, on rickety bridges over plunging streams. Stops: Hasha-ishi for two days in the rain, with plenty of time for writing in a journal; Nowata, a wretched village, overnight. Here the children are dirty and the faces of the poverty-stricken adults coarse, yet without any "trace of brutality or maliciousness in their looks or any expression of haggard despair such as one sees in the slums of our great cities." The last night is a rainy boatripe down the Tonegawa River, with dark worries over tales of pirates and Morse lamenting that his pistol is packed at the bottom of one of his

bags. Then ten miles in a ricksha bring them back to the welcome fresh bread and butter and rare roast beef of Murray's table.

One special moment in these days is well worth noting, for all it says in the soundless language that gives birth to words. Yumoto. A spa high in the mountains. The unpleasant smell of boiled egg, of sulfur hot springs. Along the street, the bathhouses, rude sheds open at the side, where members of both sexes, young and old, sit half a dozen to each wooden tub, sunk to their shoulders in steaming water. Enter two Americans, Murray and Morse, a vaudeville team bearing a thermometer. It might never do to bathe here, but the pursuit of science never ceases. Water temperature? -- ah, that is certainly worthy of study. So here they go, into a bathhouse. Morse leans over the tub, averts his eyes from the bathers, dips the thermometer into the water where it issues from the mountainside, and is startled to hear two girlish voices saluting him with cries of "Ohayo." He looks up, sees two young travellers encountered the day before, notes they are naked, notes they look "like little children" and moves on to the next bathhouse to repeat the performance. A curious crowd gathers, follows the Americans from one bathhouse to another until the task is completed. Later, Morse writes a disquisition on how, despite nude bathing, the Japanese are a modest people. He insists on the relativism of standards: "What would be immodest for us is not for them." In these notes he neglects to include the measurements of the temperature of the bath water.



Good news waited in the capital city. The request to dredge for Brachiopods was answered with the startling proposal from the Ministry of Education that he accept a position as professor at Tokyo University, organize a department of zoology and create a museum of natural history. For this he would be paid \$4200 a year and be provided with a house and a stable. The offer was too good to refuse, but that did not prevent a little bargaining to raise the salary to \$5,000. Nor was this the end of potential benefits. Some were scientific, others financial, and all so closely mixed that in a letter home they ran together: "I hope to get up lectures on Japan which will go like hot cakes, but above all I will have unparalleled facilities to study tropical life and shall make some important scientific contributions. Then I hope to write a book on Japan."

Lectures on Japan. A book on Japan. Odd ideas for a scientist who had never before strayed in word or print from his field of expertise. The decision to take the job offer was surely a rational one, an example of economic and professional self-interest. But Japan itself had something to do with it: this was more than the opportunity to exploit its exotic qualities in lecture and book. It involved the very nature of those qualities, the values they implied, the questions they raised, the feelings of discomfort and pleasure -- sometimes separate, sometimes together -- which they aroused. The land was clearly an opportunity, but one whose boundaries were wider than the financial and more mysterious than the scientific.

All this is only to say that Japan was captivating Morse, and had been doing so from the very first day. Even when he focused on its progressive elements, tradition had subtly impressed him with insights and lessons in the practical, the aesthetic, the human. The beauty of line and color in the humblest pottery, baskets and utensils, and the "exquisite taste" shown in the homes and gardens of even the poorest villages, highlighted the overstuffed rooms, vulgar prints, gimcrack decorations and bedraggled gardens of home. The clean seawalls of fishing villages, the immaculate houses of remote farm towns, the swept and well-watered streets of Tokyo all brought to mind the heaps of clamshells and ashes that marked the outskirts of New England towns, and the debris and rubbish that scarred even a "refined" academic community like Cambridge. The polite, orderly, good-natured behavior of the audience at Sumo wrestling matches raised the image of rowdy, uncouth sports crowds at home, and the sight of ricksha men, after collisions, "smiling their apologies" and going calmly onward, brought back scenes of American cabmen halting, shaking fists and hurling obscene threats.

Such incidents and memories, such judgments and contrasts, vibrated with hints, with possibilities beyond the power of Morse to convey. He was no poet. His words could only be blunt: "Thus far in my few weeks in this country I have come in contact, with few exceptions, with the laboring classes -- the farmers and work people -- and yet what a record of sobriety, artistic taste and cleanliness it has been. . . . A book might be written on . . . their honesty,

frugality, politeness, cleanliness, and every virtue that in our country might be called Christian." Now, with the status of professor, he might be looking forward to sampling the way of life of "the higher classes," but he could not forget that it was the common people who in less than a month has raised his consciousness about America and taught a most sobering lesson: "little by little the realization of why the Japanese have always called us barbarians is dawning upon us."

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Elfish. Everything, everybody, small, queer, mysterious. Little houses under blue tile roofs, little shop fronts hung with blue curtains, little people in blue costumes, funny little streets. The image of "fairy-land" comes to mind. So hackneyed, the worn-out view of every globetrotter, every second-rate journalist who has ever "done" Yokohama for a day. Lafcadio Hearn knows this, admits it, but cannot help himself. In the cozy, swaying ricksha, viewing the world over the bobbing mushroom of his runner's hat, he cannot banish such storybook language. Better to make a virtue of necessity, to forget any sense of original insight, of personal vision, and to insist that cliché is reality. So say it. Here is a realm in which everything is smaller, daintier than at home, one whose people seem kindlier and gentler, where movement is slow and soft and voices hushed. Land, life and sky are so unlike what one has known that for "imagination nourished with English folklore," this is "surely the realization . . . of the old dream of a World of Elves."

The day helps. April 4, 1890 is full of the sweetness of Japanese spring. Pleasant sun, cool air, limpid sky. Every object, distant and close, seen in sharp focus. A swirl of Chinese characters full of hidden messages: in white, black, blue and gold they dance across signboards, door posts, shop curtains, paper screens, workman's jackets. Beauty greets the eye, even in the tiniest of objects: a decorated paper bag holding a pair of chopsticks; a package of toothpicks, bound in a wrapper lettered in three colors; the sky-blue towel with a design of flying sparrows, used by the ricksha man to wipe

his face. Inside stores, the wares seem enchanted. But cheap as they are, Hearn dares not begin to buy. His appetite is too great. What he wishes is not a single item, but a store full. More than that. He wants the shop and its owner, the whole street, the city and bay, the mountains, the land and its people. He wishes to buy the experience, to purchase the moment, put it in a box, wrap it neatly and hold it inviolate forever.

Getting to the heart of things -- that is Hearn's aim. He can accept signs of modern life -- the white telegraph poles, the sewing machine store, the photography studios -- as Occidental innovations "set into an Oriental frame," but his design is for something older. "Tera e yuke" are the words to make the runner plunge between rows of ark-shaped houses, across a canal and to the foot of a steep hill with an immense flight of stone steps. Halfway up, a terrace with a huge gate, tilted Chinese roof, dragons swarming in carved stone, the feeling of a dream, a world of old picture books. Higher up, a second gate, then a low, wooden building flanked by stone lions. Shoes off. A young priest bows him inside. Dim light, soft matting underfoot, the sweet smell of incense. A large square room and at the far end a high, dark altar glowing softly with the shapes of unfamiliar metal objects. But no Buddha. In English the priest explains that the temple's statue is only shown on festival days. Hearn makes an offering anyway, makes it over the polite demurral of the priest, makes it though he admits to being neither Christian nor Buddhist, but only one who reveres "the beauty of (Buddha's) teaching, and the faith of those who follow it."

A long day of temples and Shinto shrines, mostly on hilltops. Views of Yokohama, of the bay speckled with sails, of Mount Fuji in a flawless sky. Towering torii, colossal models "of some beautiful Chinese letter," lead to shrines. Around them, gardens dazzling with the white mist of cherry blossoms; miniature landscapes with tiny groves of dwarfed trees, lilliputian lakes, microscopic streams and bridges; occasional hints of tourists in the form of English signs warning, "It is forbidden to injure the trees." Late in the afternoon a ride along Mississippi Bay, where masses of people gather sea creatures from a gleaming, low-tide landscape. This flight of steps is so steep, so high that leg muscles are aching when Hearn reaches the small, old, gray temple. He gropes towards the alter and finds himself looking into a mirror, a round polished disc of metal that gives back the reflection of his face. He is much too literary to ignore the symbol. But of what? "Illusion? Or that the Universe exists for us solely as the reflection of our souls? Or the old Chinese teaching that we must seek the Buddha only in our own hearts?" Later, he claims, the mirror begins to mock him, leads to a question that, however personally meaningful, certainly is one which will look good in print: "I am beginning to wonder whether I shall ever be able to discover that which I seek -- outside of myself!"

Lafcadio Hearn specialized in unanswerable questions. He was an odd mixture of the romantic and the practical, a man who -- two months short of his fortieth birthday -- viewed himself as "a creature of

circumstances," a person who drifted "with various forces in the direction of least resistance." Like any such characterization, this contained the normal mixture of insight and self-deception. Certainly he was a person who changed places of residence and jobs with some frequency. In the last twenty years he had lived in Cincinnati, New Orleans, Martinique, Philadelphia and New York, and had supported himself by working for half a dozen newspapers. But these moves seem less the result of drift than of inner drive, a burning desire to find and capture something that could never quite be defined. Easy enough it is to see Hearn as a restless wanderer, a seeker of the exotic, a man lusting after the imagined dark heat and sensuality of tropical landscapes, but this is only half the story. He was also in search of some place to belong, an existence enveloped in ongoing obligations, a continuity of a sort unknown since birth.

Writing was the center of Hearn's life, the activity that gave meaning to his days. That had been one of the reasons for the many moves; that is what brought him to Japan. He had achieved national recognition in the late eighties when criticism, articles and fiction produced in New Orleans had led to his being linked with authors like Joel Chandler Harris and George Washington Cable as part of an important new movement in Southern literature. At a dinner in New York in 1889, William Dean Howells, America's leading novelist, had saluted him, and early in 1890 his reputation was being confirmed with the publication of both a novel and a book of essays reflecting the two years of residence in Martinique. The promise of these works had led

an editor at Harper's to suggest the trip to Japan. Hearn was ready. An interest in Oriental culture and Buddhism had been his for a long time. So had a longing to travel to the East, a region evidently suited to his skills. Hearn was a local colorist of the exotic. His strength lay not in character and plot, not in analysis or theory, but in the evocation of little-known settings, in gossamer tales and sketches suffused with feelings of mystery, the unknown, the bizarre.

Japan, with a charm "intangible and volatile as a perfume," was the perfect setting. From the first moments in Yokohama Hearn understood that, just as he understood that the opportunities and problems facing him were large. The trouble was this: the artistic and the practical were at odds. His aim was no simple travel book -- these were already far too common -- but an ambitious volume that described Japanese life from the inside, as if by someone "taking part in the daily existence of the common people, and thinking with their thoughts." This approach implied a detailed study of the language, a stay long enough to steep himself in the customs, beliefs, folkways and habits of the natives. Before landing, Hearn may not have faced the full implications of this desire, but once in Japan they could no longer be ignored. Yokohama was as expensive as New York, Hearn's money supply was limited and he would receive no pay from Harper's until he produced acceptable work. To accomplish this literary end he would have to find a local job.

Less than a week after arriving, he knew that the most likely kind of employment was as teacher of English. Chosen as Japan's window into



the Western world, the language was required at all levels of learning, and native speakers were especially in demand. Here was a bit of luck. A letter of introduction from a Harper's editor brought Hearn into immediate contact with one of the most respected scholars in the nation, Basil Hall Chamberlain, an Englishman who served as Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Tokyo University, an author, translator and expert on the culture and customs who also -- as it turned out -- happened to admire Hearn's writings. And then another piece of luck. The single native personally known to Hearn, Ichizo Hattori, manager of the Japanese exhibit at the New Orleans International Exposition of 1885, was now Vice Minister of Education. Surely with two such powerful allies, a teaching position could not be far away.

But neither was it close. In 1890 the boom days were over. No longer was Japan a wide open land of opportunity for Western scholars, teachers, technicians and administrators. A first generation of native experts had now been trained, and the Meiji government was saving resources by drastically cutting back on jobs for foreigners. Such a policy both reflected and helped to promote nationalism. By now the great mania for Western ways had peaked and passed. Certainly the importation of technology and foreign institutions continued -- Tokyo now boasted both electric and telephone service, a Constitution had been promulgated in 1889, and the first elections to the Diet were in the offing. But in cultural and social matters the swing was back towards tradition. The advocacy of intermarriage with Caucasians to

improve the race, the cries for a simpler language like English to replace the complexities of Japanese, the conversions to Christianity, were largely of the past. Japan was beginning to recover and revere its heritage. For a hungry Westerner it was hardly the most opportune moment to arrive.

A newcomer like Hearn could not be expected to understand these developments. Just as well. Such knowledge could only have intensified a mounting impatience as days began to stretch into weeks and no job offer arrived. A man who always felt on the edge of financial ruin, Hearn found the need to husband small resources while waiting for a possible position more than painful -- it verged on the frightening. He lived cheaply, staying at Carey's, a small waterfront hotel frequented by sailors, and supplemented an occasional royalty check by giving English lessons to a boy of mixed Japanese-American parentage. But only the magic of his surroundings could keep money worries at bay. Those first-day impressions, so novel and overwhelming "that the mind refused to digest them," might begin to fall into patterns, but familiarity served to intensify the initial feeling that Japan was a "land of dreams," one full of "strange Gods" which he seemed to "have known and loved . . . before somewhere." His vision was of himself as a man on a quest with a goal difficult, if not impossible, to attain. His aim was "to see into the heart of this mysterious people."

Gods and demons. Hearn is on their trail. An endless job in this land of both Buddhism and Shinto, so curiously mixed together for a thousand years. So many manifestations of the divine that nobody has ever attempted to count them. Buddha in his many forms: as Fudo-sama, the unmoved, the immutable; as Amida, the teacher; as Yakushi-sama, the all-healer, the physician of souls. Kwannon, the Bodhisatva who renounced Nirvana to remain available to humans as the Goddess of Mercy; tender Jizō, protector of children; Emma-Dō, of the terrible countenance, King of Death; Inari-sama, the fox who is God of Rice; Benten, Goddess of the Sea; Hachiman, God of Warfare; Koshī, overseer of roads and highways; and Kishi-bojī, mother of demons. Difficult to keep them straight, to memorize their names and attributes, for they multiply, they vary and change forms, they intermingle. But Hearn knows this: monstrous as "Christian bigotry" may find such a sprawling pantheon, it expresses the "infinite Unknown" which underlies all religion.

Temples and shrines. His focus. What he writes about in notes to himself, letters to friends, articles for the public. The Buddhism he knows from books is nothing like the living faith, "something infinitely tender, touching, naif, beautiful." A mania of touring: "I mingle with crowds of pilgrims to the great shrines; I ring the great bells; and burn incense rods before the great smiling gods." His constant companion is Akira Manabe, a young, English-speaking student of Buddhism, a guide to out-of-the-way shrines, a translator of old inscriptions and conversations with priests, recounter of legends and

folk tales. When Yokohama holds no more surprises, they are off on pilgrimages. To Kamakura, in the thirteenth century the crowded capital of the first great Shogun, Yoritomo, now a straggly country village dozing in the summer sun, its air heavy with the aroma of seaweed soup, daikon and incense from temples crumbling amidst rice fields and ancient groves of trees. To Enoshima, a misty blue hill in the afternoon sea haze. A hike across a velvet brown sand spit, and under a giant bronze torii and into a town from fable: a single street of crooked steps climbing steeply upward; high peaked, gabled houses with curving eaves and airy balconies casting sharp shadows; multicolored flags slapping in the sea wind; streets crowded with pilgrims in clean white dress and broad hats, carrying walking staves, refugees from a half-remembered romance.

So much to see, to learn, to understand. Lessons everywhere, in each new experience, but difficult it is to specify their nature. Climbing so many steps to weathered shrines on sacred hills; viewing so many sculptures with multiple arms and multiple heads in wood, bronze and stone; viewing so many scrolls and sanskrit texts in the dim candle light of inner temple rooms; breathing the stillness of memory in so many cemeteries thick with splintered stone shafts; hearing so many tales of warriors who become gods, and gods who become beasts, and beasts who become men; resting in so many gardens of rock, moss and sand, of carefully trimmed bush and blooming tree; dreaming on so many afternoons in a blaze of sea and sun, beneath a sky so lofty, so full of ghost-pure clouds that one may think them souls "about to melt

forever into some blue Nirvana." In Kamakura, ringing the great bell of Engakuji; in Enoshima, visiting the dragon cave of Benten; at Obon, the Festival of the Dead, moving with crowds through dark streets to a Shingon temple blazing with rows of paper lanterns; on Buddha's birthday at Zotokuin, paying for three fortune slips and finding that two predict a lucky future.

The past concerns him more. Today is the laughing, playful crowds at Yokohama's popular temples, the happy sign of a people who do not "fear the gods which they have made." Today is the steel railroad line which carries him to Kamakura, the late afternoon whistle of a locomotive that calls him away from a sagging shrine and punctuates a solemn truth: the old gods are dying. He knows this, fears it, realizes it cannot be helped. Not the major ones. Not Benten or Kwannon, for reverence for the sea and the power of mercy will outlive all temples. But the lesser, the local, the simple gods, those who have eased so many troubled minds, gladdened so many simple hearts, heard so many innocent prayers. Their dusty, neglected shrines vibrate with a spirit congenial to his soul. Pagan he calls himself, but he is also a man of the nineteenth century, one who understands and accepts the "laws of progress" and the irrefutable philosophy of evolution!" But for a moment, for more than one, he can wish to set them aside, make them stand still, decree them out of existence so that these simple deities "of a people's childhood" might continue to live on.

A suitable job came through in June. The position: teacher of English at both a Middle and a Normal School. The place: Matsue, a former Castle Town in Shimane Prefecture, three hundred miles southwest of Tokyo and on the opposite side of Honshu, facing the Asian mainland. The compensation: one hundred dollars a month, paid in yen, no fortune, but a decent enough salary in a remote, rural area where the inflationary thrust of Western influence was still little known. The offer was just in time. Resources were dwindling and an exchange of angry letters with Hearn's editor at Harper's over the publisher's past treatment of him had led to a complete break. As it was, only an advance from the understanding governor of the prefecture allowed him to get through the period until September, when school was to begin.

A long three months, a period full of moodswings. The spell of Japan still held him, the furious pace of sightseeing continued: "I've been living in temples and old Buddhist cemeteries, making pilgrimages and worshipping astounding Buddhas." But difficulties, tiny clouds on the horizon, were beginning to appear. The midsummer climate was too hot for comfort and stories of the rigorous winter were not promising. The language was proving to be "extraordinarily difficult" and he now foresaw a stay of "at least five years to write a book." Since the Japanese seemed "the most lovable" people in the world, such a long residence was not a problem, except for those moments when it was a huge problem. The prospect of living in a remote area might be the best way of getting to know the land, but that did not prevent moments of self-pity: "I am afraid I must resign myself to melt into this

Orient and be bound in it -- out of the hearing of European tongues or the sight of European faces, in a little village where no stranger ever goes."

He was beginning to write now, turning hastily-scribbled notes into short pieces that would capture the special feeling of those first, bright April days, attempting to render the legends, folk tales and ghost stories recounted by young Manabe into words that would convey to Western readers the enchantment that they held for him. Fairy-tale language came naturally from his pen -- words like "strangeness," "charming," "mysterious," "magic," "witchery," and "dreamy" pervade both personal accounts and traditional tales. No hint either here or in letters home of visits to Tokyo. Almost no indication -- except for a few fleeting references -- that he is living in a rapidly-industrializing nation, or residing among several thousand Westerners in a Treaty Port wide open to the maritime commerce of the world.

No, Hearn did not choose to mention such things. They were a violation, a threat to those feelings Japan had aroused, feelings he believed were not part of the self, but embedded in outside reality. Viewing the giant bronze Buddha at Kamakura, he felt wrapped in a blanket of gentleness, of tender and calm and perfect repose that seemed the "Soul of the East," the reflection of "the higher life of the race that imagined it." Here was acceptance, boundless understanding. Repayment for this was in words that expressed love for everything Japanese -- for the "domesticated nature" of both rural landscape and urban gardens; for the traditions of art, "as far in

advance of our art as the old Greek art was superior to that of the earliest European art-gropings;" for the people, "the poor simple humanity of the country. It is divine . . . I love their gods, their customs, their dress, their bird-like quavering songs, their houses, their superstitions, their faults."

One long step farther. A moment when desire aimed beyond love to fusion: "I only wish I could be reincarnated in some little Japanese baby, so that I could see and feel the world as beautifully as a Japanese brain does." Here is posturing and literary conceit, but also an aching recognition of personal limitation. Hearn was familiar with love and its consequences, was involved in a painful pattern: "I resolve to love nothing, and love always too much for my own peace of mind -- places, things, and persons -- and lo! Presto! Everything is swept away and becomes a dream-like life itself." Now Japan hinted at another possibility. Perhaps the cycle could be broken, continuity created, an enduring commitment be made. Early on he began to toy with the idea of remaining here permanently. The aim was to become part of this tradition, vanish into it, blend with something larger than that small self which suffered pain, loss, separation. Three weeks after landing in Yokohama he could calmly, even hopefully, suggest to possibility of a stay here that would never end. Someday he might permanently rest "under big trees in some old Buddhist cemetery, with six laths above me, inscribed with prayers in an unknown tongue, and a queerly carved monument typifying those five elements into which we are supposed to melt away."